DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 046 452 LI 002 481

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TITLE Community Analysis.
PUB DATE Jun 67
NOTE 19p.; Prepared for the LAD Preconference on Library Buildings, San Francisco, June 23, 1967

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Community Study, Library Planning, *Library Services, *Library Standards, Library Surveys, *Public Libraries, Research, Use Studies

ABSTRACT

Community analysis has been a prescribed tool of public librarianship for over 25 years. Although its value has been recognized in published public library standards, librarians have rarely used this method of improving library services. Emphasis is placed upon the need for the development of a community analysis methodology for librarians. It is stressed that community analysis is essential for planning effective library programs to meet the needs and expectations of the people. The steps in community analysis as appropriate for librarians are: (1) planning, (2) collecting the data, (3) organizing the data, (4) interpretation of the data, (5) revaluating the library program in light of the study, (6) reporting the findings and (7) providing for continuing the study on a regular basis. As described here, community analysis is a multi-purpose tool which is essential in developing library activities in the community. (SG)

ED 046452

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June, 1967

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS
Prepared for the
LAD PRECONFERENCE ON LIBRARY BUILDINGS
San Francisco, June 23, 1967

For nearly twenty-five years, the community analysis, study, or survey --- take your choice of these synonomous terms --- has been a prescribed tool of public librarianship. Post-War Standards for Public Libraries[1] (1943), A National Plan for Public Library Service[2] (1948), and Public Library Service[3] (1956) charge the library to study its community so that it may know the people, groups, and institutions in the library's service responsibility and can develop a program fitted to their needs. This prescription is repeated in the latest version of the public library standards.

Under principle 17, "The community library must be an integral part of the area it serves", the new statement of standards explains that

> Communities differ, as do people, a service institution such as the library must be closely related to its constituency, to the predominant

[1]American Library Association. Committee on Post-War Planning. Post-War Standards for Public Libraries. Chicago, American Library Association, 1943, p. 44

[2]National Plan for Public Library Service. Chicago, American Library Association, 1948. p. 15

[3]Public Libraries Division. Co-ordinating Committee on Revision of Public Library Standards. Public Library Service: A Guide to Evaluation, with Minimum Standards. Chicago, American Library Association, 1956. p. 25

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interests of local people, to their beliefs and aspirations, and to their problems. The library must know of, and work with, the organized groups and established institutions which the people maintain.

The first standard under this principle, 17 1, directs that

> Continuous as well as periodic study of the community should be made through knowledge obtained by participation in governmental planning, through study and coordination of surveys already made by other agencies, through cooperation with other organizations in new studies, or by a library initiated community analysis.[4]

Despite the repeated authority of the standards over several decades, the occasional attention given the subject by library leaders (principally members of the distinguished and social science oriented faculty of the University of Chicago's Graduate Library School), and the obvious argument of the plain good sense of an analysis as a basis for developing the library's program, the community analysis largely is an unused activity by public librarians.

Perhaps the cause of this neglect is the preoccupation with the day-to-day requirements of operating a library when a community

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[4]Public Library Association. Standards Committee. Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966. Chicago, American Library Association, 1967. pp 28-29

analysis requires a long-term commitment of time and attention.

Perhaps librarians are unprepared to plan and initiate such a study. (I am not aware that my library school had an appropriate course when I was studying for my masters degree. I know of none of my friends who've had such a course at that level. I am unaware of a required course in research and research methods for masters candidates today which covers the subject in such scope and depth that the student completing the course could proceed to undertake a community analysis acceptable by the standards of social science research.

Perhaps the absence of an adequate printed, how-to guide discourages the members of our "self-sufficient" profession from attempting this sociological exercise. Library literature includes a few substantial items on the subject, but these only are suitable as background. Joseph L. Wheeler's The Library and the Community[5], while still exhibiting an unsurprising degree of modernity, suffers from being 43 years old, and is focused, as indicated by its subtitle, on "Increased book service through library publicity based on community studies". Another older work, with several chapters appropriate to the subject of community analysis, is The Library Survey, Problems and Methods by E. W. McDiarmid, Jr.[6]

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[5]Wheeler, Joseph L. The Library and the Community. Chicago, American Library Association, 1924.

[6]McDiarmid, E. W., Jr. The Library Survey, Problems and Methods, Chicago, American Library Association, 1940.

Lowell Martin's "Community Analysis for the Library"[7] is 24 years old and was not intended as a "how-to-do-it". The proceedings of the California State Library's institute-workshop, "What To Do Until the Architect Comes: Planning Library Buildings", 1957, printed as an issue of News Notes of California Libraries contains papers by Margaret Klausner, Jane Cassels Record, James Bryan, Francis McCarthy, James Noble, and Howard Samuelson[8] which are interesting and helpful but brief. Studying the Community, the handbook prepared by the Library-Community Project of the American Library Association[9] is limited to traditional library methodology and is oriented to an analysis of one aspect of public library activity, adult services, particularly group services. More comprehensive treatment of community analysis, and social surveys in general, may be found in the work of social scientists,[10] but these have a

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[7]Martin, Lowell. "Community Analysis for the Library" in Carnovsky Leon and Lowell Martin, ed. The Library in the Community. Chicago, University of Chicago, 1944. pp 201-14

[8]News Notes of California Libraries, vol. 52, no. 3 (July, 1957). The papers are, in order of appearance: Howard Samuelson, "The Library and Community Needs", pp 494-498; Jane Cassels Record, "The Community Survey and the Library", pp 498-501; James Noble, "Planning and the Library", pp 501-503; Margaret Klausner and James Bryan, "An Outline of Some Criteria and Factors Useful in Preliminary Building Planning and Site Selection", pp 504-513, and Frances McCarthy, "Library Site Selection", 514-522

[9]American Library Association. Library Community Project. Studying the Community. Chicago, American Library Association, 1960

[10]For example, Irwin T. Sanders, Making Good Communities Better, Lexington, University of Kentucky, 1950; Clair Selltiz and others, Research Methods in Social Relations, rev. ed., New York, Holt, 1959; Roland L. Warren, Studying Your Community, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1955; and Pauline Young, Scientific Social Surveys and Research, New York, Prentice-Hall, 1949.

different perspective, rarely even mentioning libraries, and certainly are not designed for self instruction of librarian initiates in community analysis.

The library profession needs a self instruction manual on the subject; it is yet to appear. (Today's paper makes no pretense of attempting to fill this need. My purpose is to 1) emphasize the need for the development of a community analysis methodology for librarians, 2) indicate the essential place of community analysis in library planning, including the planning of a library construction project, 3) and outline the steps in community analysis, as currently appropriate for librarians.)

For a library program to be effective, in fact to have a valid library program, every librarian needs to have detailed, integrated, organized factual knowledge about all those conditions, social forces, and trends in his community which have a signigicant effect or may be anticipated to have a significant effect on the library services for which he is responsible. The technique for identifying, collecting, checking, organizing, interpreting and reporting the facts about the community which support and develop this necessary knowledge is community analysis. The analysis, if it be research, is applied research and is not concerned with discovering truths or the natural laws which pervade the library profession.

In this definition of community analysis, "community" means the total people, institutions, and physical conditions and

facilities to be found in a geographically identifiable area in which service to the residents is a legal responsibility of the library making the analysis, is presumed by the residents to be their right, or is actively sought by the residents. While the problems of serving those people who live within the legal boundaries of our library districts may be more than enough for us, we must recognize that those who would use our libraries but who live beyond the political pale cannot be ignored, and must be included in our consideration. Who knows, with the movement toward state-wide library service and the regionalization of library service, one of "them" may be on our board next month.

A community analysis may be made for a number of purposes. In fact, it is hardly conceivable that a community analysis, no matter how narrow its defined objective, will meet only one purpose. There are, however, two major purposes, which may be referred to as program evaluation and market research.

Program evaluation assesses the relevance of current goals, policies programs, and activities to current needs of the community and evaluated the library's current services and performance. Examples of analysis for program evaluation purposes are an analysis to apply more than standards in determining the adequacy of present physical facilities, to review for a new head librarian how well the existing program is relating to community need to evaluate library activities when there is a noticeable decrease in library interest and use, to react positively to library board or community

criticism of library's service, or to decrease or terminate a service, such as deposit collections in elementary schools or the operation of public branches in school buildings.

Market research reveals unmet needs and supplies the information necessary for new services and facilities. Examples of analysis for market research purposes are to provide information for locating and planning a library building or buildings, to discover existing organizations with programs which could be complemented or supplemented by the library, to aid in determining areas and elements of the community not being reached by existing library services, to suggest new library services appropriate to the community, to revise materials selection and staffing policies, to determine the potential for financing new services and facilities, to react to major changes in community, and to work out objectives and goals in long range planning. In addition to the major purposes of program evaluation and market research, community analysis may be made as a public relation activity to identify the library to the public, as an in-service training activity to provide the staff with fuller knowledge of the community and develop research skills, and as a means of collecting previously unavailable information about the community for use as a reference resource. Before a community analysis is begun, the library must satisfy several prerequisites. The most important of these, a sine qua non for any institution that accepts the responsibility of operating in modern society and by the canons of modern administration, is

the determination, with "continuous revision", of the formal terms of what the library is supposed to be and to do. As obviously important and as fundamental as is the statement of philosophy, I suspect that relatively few libraries have given formal consideration to the philosophic basis for their activity and have given statement to the philosophy so determined.

It is not my purpose here to dictate or to suggest which of the frequently mentioned areas of library activity --- recreation, information, education, research, and aesthetic appreciation --- are appropriate for the public library or what their order of priority should be. This responsibility and concern rests with the individual institution and must be determined in part by the needs and the emphasis of the local community. (One of the strengths and rewards of our profession is this dynamic capacity for self-determination with its concomitant variety.)

A community analysis, if it is to be a meaningful activity, must be a reaction to a library problem or problems, i.e., obstructions to the achievement of the objectives in the particular library's philosophy. The board, the staff, library users, or even unsympathetic non-library using members of the community may call attention to these problems. If these problems recognized and considered by a significant group of the library's family or members of the community, have the commitment of this group to working for a solution, and are subject to remedy through implementation of the recommendations developing from a study of the community, then such an analysis is appropriate.

A study of the community requires more in time, and perhaps in money, than many libraries anticipate, but if the study is to be done it must be done well, and the library must be prepared to give the activity adequate support. For a variety of reasons --- the cyclical nature of library activities, the lack of a previous study activity, to continue, the proble necessity of training library staff and community in necessary methods and techniques, the recruiting of study staff (both paid and volunteer), the sharing of administration and staff time between regular library operations and the study, and the time normally required for each of the study's steps --- a community analysis project, executed adequately, will take considerable time. Admitting the necessity of some compromise between the goals and standards of social science research which require a more scientifically rigorous methodology and the study proponents who saw the problems and want answers, the study still will take approximately a year. (The Library-Community Project of the American Library Association suggested at least 15 months, for a study, not including the planning phase.)[11]

Related to the prerequisite of adequate time for the survey, is the absence of demands having a higher priority on the time and attention of the library. As great an investment as the study is it should not risk delay deemphasis, or short-cutting. Better to postpone the study, than to mount it with less than top priority.

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[11]American Library Association. Library Community Project. op. cit. p. 9

The budget required for the project will depend upon such factors as the size of the community, the purpose of the study, the techniques chosen and size of samples, the consultants and staff which must be employed, the amount of data already available, the reference resources to be purchased, and the form and extent of publication of the study report. In addition consideration must be given to the amount of time of the present staff which will be assigned to the study activity and may require substitute replacement. ~~A further prerequisite is the availability of the~~ services of a person or persons who can plan an adequate study. Planning obviously is a most important step in the analysis process, and if the library staff does not have this capacity, then this skill must be available to the library.

Finally, the library undertaking the analysis must be commited to consider the study a dynamic activity which as the primary basis for library planning and program development must be reviewed, expanded, and revised regularly.

With the prerequisites satisfied, the library turns to ~~the community analysis itself~~, which will ~~consist of seven steps:~~

Planning

Collecting the data

Organizing the data

Interpreting the organized data

Revaluating the library program in the light of the study

Reporting the findings

Providing for continuing the study on a regular basis

Planning the study. In recognizing the problem or problems which initiate the process of community analysis, the library also has determined the objective of the study, although to furnish the necessary reference point for the planning, execution, and evaluation of the study, the objective or objectives must be stated specifically. [The specific statement is most important because it indicates the boundaries of the survey activity and reduces the possibility that the study will be broader in scope or more intensive than needs be.] To be certain that the stated objective or objectives are as clear and specific as possible several people sensitive to the library environment, the community, and planning activities should react to and refine the statement.

Next a series of questions are formed, the answers to which will satisfy directly the objectives or which will suggest the action to be taken to satisfy the objectives. These questions must be clearly related to the purpose of the study, be specific enough to be useful, and be answerable, i.e., questions for which observation or experimentation can provide the needed information, like the objectives, the questions should have the scrutiny and editing of several people. Any doubtful questions should be modified or rephrased to meet the criterion of answerability within the presumed capabilities of the study or should be eliminated from the list. If answering all the questions would require more time or resources than can be made available, then priorities should be

assigned and the questions of lesser significance deferred for reconsideration in the continuing study activity which this analysis should initiate. Since planning, and frequently on an area basis, is an activity in which many social institutions are involved, studies and research which can supply some of the information required by the analysis, as well as general background information already may be available in somebody else's survey. State, metropolitan, county, and city planning departments; the research units of social welfare agencies; research offices of school systems; area development activities; chambers of commerce; and graduate departments of sociology are examples of some of these other surveyors. Unless such a list already is available, the library should compile a full list of all the agencies at the local, regional, and state level conceivably having a responsibility for planning which might be contributive to a library study. (Don;t forget that some foundations and privately supported research organizations may have done studies in your area). Each of the possibilities on the list should be checked not only for studies made but also for studies which may be in progress or planned. Ignorant duplication is an ill-afforded luxury in a society which has knowledge needs for greater than its research activities can supply. Perhaps the questions posed in the immediate community analysis have been asked and answered in a previous library or other based study. Such a prior study does not automatically elimiate the need for the current project;

significant changes in the library or the community may have occurred, the earlier methodology may be questioned, or another study may have been incomplete. At the time for the research of other studies, an examination and consideration of the literature of studies also will be helpful in planning and executing the community analysis.

With this preparation, the research design is made. The research design includes the identification of the specific data necessary to answer the study's basic questions, the selection of the methods to be used in collecting this data, and the means of analyzing and interpreting the data. Since everyone, including librarians, has biases, there must be in the design a special concern that the data collected and the methods used provide neither intentional nor unintentional support of any preconceptions which those involved with the study may have. Once the initial design for the analysis is completed, a trial run is helpful in appraising the design, detecting the skills and competencies which need developing in the study staff, and in introducing the impending study to the community at large. On the basis of this trial, or at any other time during the process of the study, the research design may be revised to provide for such conditions as omissions lately discovered, new situations in the community, and recognition of better methodology. There are those concerned with library sponsored community analysis who feel that because the librarian's training is unlikely to have equipped him with the

skills necessary for such a study as a sociologist or other expert in this field should be employed for this job. Despite the ample evidence of this sociological naivete manifested by the literature of library community studies, most library commentators still feel that a study developed by librarians, with liberal use of specialists ---sociologists, political scientists, economists, and statisticians, for example --- for assistance in the librarian's areas of deficiency and conducted by library staff or community volunteers, as appropriate, provides the best community analysis. Such a team approach has the advantage of exposing the study to a greater variety of reactions, reducing the risks of bias or limited experience, reducing the out-of-pocket expenses for personnel (although there will be a greater diversion of library staff time), providing quicker access to sources of local data, reducing the risks of the study's being aborted because of the loss of leadership during the study or the questioning of the financial requirements of an adequate study, providing the library staff with training in study techniques and methods, and, if community representatives are a part of the team, arousing the interest and understanding of the community.

The specialists to provide the lacking study expertise likely are to be found or are available wherever a library is planning a community analysis; a high school or college faculty, social welfare agencies, planning commissions or other governmental activities, or business with economic or market research activities

are some of the likely places to find the people with competencies in research such as the construction of questionnaires, determination of adequate samples, and training staff in interviewing techniques. The composition of the study staff, i.e., whether it will consist of library staff members, a special staff recruited and paid for the project, or community volunteers depends upon such factors as the purpose of the analysis, staff load, and the availability of other manpower (either on a paid or a volunteer basis).

Collecting the data. The kinds of data needed to answer the questions posed in the community analysis, the identification of the sources of this data and the methods appropriate to discovering and to collecting the data are the concerns for which provision is made in the research design. For most librarians this is the phase of the analysis which requires the guidance of specialists in sociological methodology. Data collected must have validity, i.e., tell what is assumed it will tell, and the sample used must be reliable, i.e., truly represent the whole. The types of data to be collected depend upon the purpose of the study, but will include information from some of these categories: historical, geographical, demographic, political and legal, economic, transportation and communi cation, social activity and organization, and other social phenomena. To obtain this data surveys use the methods of statistical analysis --- the principle method, historical study and description. Occasionally the experimental method will be used, but this unfortunately still

is alien to librarianship and is largely unused. The devices and techniques employed in these methods include open-end, structured, and group interviews; questionnaires; checklists; rating scales; observation and description; statistics gathered from primary and secondary sources; projections; and examinations of records and documents. The "raw material" to which these devices and techniques are applied are the individuals, the groups and organizations, the institutions and the recorded information to be found in printed and other form. As the data are collected, checks must be made continually to be sure that the study staff and workers are collecting data which are valid, complete, comprehensible, consistent, and reliable. Checks at this state also serve the purpose of discovering problems early, when the problem may be corrected with a minimum of inconvenience, repetition, and delay.

Organizing and tabulating the data. In this step of the community analysis, the data are placed in the appropriate category, tabulated, and recorded in tables, charts, maps, and other forms. If in the research design stage these forms for the recording of each set of data have been chosen, this phase of the study is expedited. Care should be taken in the selection of the forms to be sure that they will show quickly, clearly, and accurately the data which they contain.

Analyzing and interpreting the data. This step is the time of truth, and if the community analysis has been done well answers to the original questions will appear here. As many people as possible

who posess experience, background, knowledge, intellectual honesty, imagination, and an orientation to reality should examine the data thoroughly and discuss the data and their implications with the others who are engaged in the interpretation and analysis. From this interaction comes a list of the library concerns related to the purpose of the community analysis and suggestions for action which will eliminate or significantly reduce these concerns.

Revaluation of the library's programs. Whatever responsibility the library may have had in the creation and continuance of the concerns identified in the community study, the library now has the responsibility to react positively and effectively to the suggestions for the changes in the library operation and program. If the library has anticipated this eventuality, which is implicit in all community analysis, it will have made a survey of itself,' discovered the areas of its operation which are weak or faulty, and undertaken corrective action. If the library has not anticipated the need to be evaluated, now is not too late. Little can be done until the library is in a position to fulfill its role, and it needs an appraisal as a prerequisite to the demands placed upon it as a result of the community analysis.

Reporting the findings. A draft of the report containing summaries of the relevant statistical data and other information collected by the study, the concerns identified by the survey group, and the suggestions for changes in the library's operation and services should have the review and reaction of the study team, and if indicated, a revision. The report in its final form should be

distributed widely. If the analysis is for an internal purpose and not for public or community use, copies should go the the board, the staff, the members of the survey team, and others with an appropriate concern. If the analysis is for library and community use, at a minimum copies additionally should go to the groups and institutions in the community which have a planning function, organizations related to the library by use or responsibility, the mass media serving the community, community leaders, and individuals indicating an interest in the study. In every case --- because there is a paucity of survey reports in library science collections --- a copy of the community analysis sould be sent to each state library, to each accredited graduate library school, and to each appropriate library bibliographic tool (e.g. Library Literature, Public Affairs Information Service, and Public Library Abstracts).

The form of the report will be determined by the nature of the distribution. It may be duplicated by stencil duplication or by printing. It may be looseleaf, in pocket folders, or booklet or newspaper, or it may appear as a poster or series of posters, flip charts, slides or filmstrips, or be on tape.

Provision for the analysis to be a continuing activity. Every community is continually changing. Library staffs are continually changing. The philosophy of library service is undergoing a subtle, but continuing change. If a library is to relate to its community, and today's community is not tomorrow's community, today's library --- even if it's giving superior service in 1967 --- must change if it is to meet the requirements brought by chage. To know

what changes are occurring requires constant monitoring and analysis. To encourage this continuing study, personnel should be assigned specific responsibility for this and a schedule for continuing the study should be made.

The community analysis as described here is a multi-purpose tool, essential in developing library activities in the community. Whether it is for evaluating present materials, personnel, and facilities or for determining new services and the appropriate supporting materials, personnel, or facilities, the community analysis is a library activity with which every librarian should have a familiarity by association.